

27 January 1977

NOTE TO: D/OPEI

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[redacted] and I have decided to do two papers on the national estimates process. Bill is working on a paper assessing the validity of the Team B charges. I'm working on a paper about the systemic problems underlying the national estimates on the Soviet Union.

As a means of stimulating our collective thinking on the B Team report, I have set down my own conclusions about the validity of their charges in the attached paper. Please provide any comments you have on this paper by COB January 28.



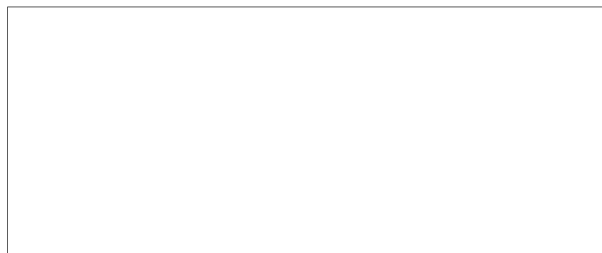
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Attachment: JJM Views on B Team Report

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21 January 1977

JJM Views on B Team Report

1. B Team: NIEs concentrate too much on hard data, neglect analysis of available soft data, especially unclassified literature.

My view:

- True during mid-'60s to early '70s (there are reasons--perhaps not good reason in retrospect, but reasons nevertheless). Since 1973, Community has put more effort into utilizing soft data.
- Community efforts to collect and analyze soft data and integrate it with hard data need to be increased. There are resource, training, and organizational problems to be resolved before this increase can come about.
- B Team charge is a mixture of historical truth, valid observation that Community must still do better on soft data, and disagreement with Community on conclusions drawn from soft data currently available (not all soft data supports the B Team--e.g., evidence supports the view that Soviets have high respect for US technical and industrial capabilities).
- Community has made more use of soft data at an earlier date in general purpose forces area than in strategic forces area (doctrine, exercises).

2. B Team: NIEs contain a number of basic assumptions and judgments about Soviet strategic objectives which are not founded in evidence but are uncritical reflections of US attitudes. These mirror-image assumptions include:

- Granting excessive legitimacy to Soviet obsession with national security.
- Defensive character of Soviet military policy.
- Treatment of deterrent capabilities as distinct from warfighting capability, from Soviet point of view.
- Soviets will be satisfied with parity.
- Soviet military programs are primarily responses to US programs.

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- Soviets do not believe superiority is feasible and therefore will not waste resources trying to achieve it.
- Hardline Soviet public statements are for political purposes, and are not to be taken as a guide to their intentions.

My view:

- There have been mirror-image assumptions in NIEs and I believe some still linger on. Since the increased use of soft data starting in 1973 and since the debate about the implications of the Soviet military buildup, the Community has been more conscious of this phenomenon and has reduced the frequency of occurrence. The B Team report will further sensitize the Community in this regard.
- Some (most?) of the current instances of "mirror-imaging" actually are cases in which the Community draws different conclusions from the data than does the B Team. We can debate about who is right, but charge of "uncritical mirror-imaging" about Soviet objectives is less valid now than in late 1960s.
- Legitimacy of Soviet obsession with national security: less of a tendency to do this now than in 1960s. Does seem to be a motive for Soviet forces (not intended by Community to be a justification for these forces).
- Defensive character of Soviet military policy: B Team and Community draw different conclusions from the soft data.
- Deterrence and warfighting. I had a strong sense that, until 1973, the Community imparted a mutual assured destruction view to the Soviets that was not justified, based on the soft data. The estimates began to move away from this view in 1973 and the latest 11-3/8 and 11-4 seem to be OK on this score. In the general purpose forces estimates, the deterrence-warfighting dichotomy never seems to have reared its head.
- Soviets will be satisfied with parity. Clearly this view was held in the strategic force estimates through SALT I, with no evidential basis. Only in 1973 did the weight of evidence to the contrary begin to shift Community, or at least CIA, opinion. I think the B Team called this one accurately.

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- Soviet military programs are primarily responses to US programs. This is a tough one. Clearly, in the broadest sense, there is linkage between US and Soviet military programs. It is equally clear to me that one is hard pressed to show direct linkage on program-by-program basis (in the sense that if the US were to halt certain programs the Soviets would halt other programs, or that certain US programs will stimulate Soviet programs). But this is a matter on which reasonable people may disagree. This seems to be the case with the estimates and the B Team.
- Soviet belief in the feasibility of superiority. Whether or not the Soviets believe they can achieve superiority over the US is matter for honest differences; the B Team and the estimates do differ on the score. I do not necessarily share the B Team's position (I'm open on that matter), but I do share the B Team's discomfort with the position of the estimates, which even now convey the impression that the Soviets are wasting resources in a vain attempt to gain nuclear superiority. But, the estimates have gotten better, starting in 1973, on discussion of elements of superiority such as the perceived balance.
- Weight to be given to unclassified Soviet literature. The B Team differs from the estimates on this matter, but I feel the Community does give serious attention to unclassified sources, for both strategic and general purpose forces. The issue in this area is whether enough resources are being devoted to exploitation of unclassified sources. I think not.

3. B Team: The NIE practice of looking at Soviet military and foreign policy efforts piecemeal leads to a serious underestimate of the Soviet threat to US interests.

My view:

- The B Team is not correct on this matter, with one exception-- the NIE practice fails to give proper attention to the Soviet theater nuclear threat, since it is not covered in NIE 11-3/8 and is given only scant attention in NIE 11-14. The new IIM on Soviet peripheral strategic nuclear forces will not fill this bill, since it will not address tactical nuclear forces.

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Generally, however, NIEs must deal in piecemeal fashion with the Soviet force posture in order to serve the needs of their various audiences. The Community does periodically try to tie the pieces together in such efforts as NIE 11-4 and in the recent IIM on Soviet military trends.

4. B Team: NIEs make net assessment judgments which are not clearly labeled as such and which are not based on analysis net assessment analyses.

My view:

- The B Team is right. NIE 11-3/8-76 is less culpable than earlier 11-3/8s, but still suffers to some extent from this problem (e.g., in the discussion of the SLBM threat to US strategic bombers). Increasingly, however, the net assessment judgments of 11-3/8 are based on analysis (e.g., Soviet ASW capabilities); the B Team disagrees with the conclusions. The B Team charge is probably still accurate insofar as general purpose force NIEs are concerned. I think the Community is moving toward the right policy, as expressed in the DCI's memo to PFIAB on 19 Jan 1977 (net judgments can and should be made in NIEs in order to assess Soviet capabilities; but net judgments should be clearly labeled as such and the basis for this judgment should be explained).

5. B Team: NIE 11-3/8 series have been overly sensitive to US policy pressures (SALT, efforts to reduce US strategic force spending), to the extent that the estimates have failed to alert policymakers to the long-term, inimical nature of Soviet objectives and actions.

My view:

- The 11-3/8s of the late 1960s and early 1970s probably did fail to alert policymakers to the (in retrospect) probable buildup and qualitative improvement of Soviet strategic forces. Starting in 1973, the strategic NIEs began to perform the alerting function better, but they still do not adequately convey the nature of the long-term problems in the US-Soviet relationship. It is doubtful, however, that US Government policy pressures on the estimators are responsible for this problem.

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